

CHAPTER 7 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

SECTION 1 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH PROGRAM

7.1.1 PURPOSE

This section describes the importance of the occupational health program, establishes the policy for conducting occupational medical monitoring, and describes the methods to be used in the development of the APHIS occupational health program.

7.1.2 GENERAL

Health problems associated with employment in APHIS are not identified as frequently as other accidents, but often are more severe, longer lasting, and result in more lost days per incident.

Various environmental factors or stressors are associated with employment and may cause sickness, significant discomfort, or affect productivity. Exposure to these harmful stressors or hazards may produce an immediate employee response due to the intensity of the exposure, or the response may be developed as a result of longer exposure at a lower intensity. These environmental factors and stressors may be classified as:

Chemical Hazards: Chemical hazards arise from an excessive airborne concentration of mists, vapors, gases, or solids that are in the form of dusts or fumes. In addition to the hazard of inhalation, any of these materials may act as skin irritants or may be toxic by absorption through the skin.

Physical Hazards: Physical hazards include excessive levels of electromagnetic and ionizing radiation, noise, vibration, and extremes of temperature and pressure.

Biological Hazards: Biological hazards include insects, fungi, viral and bacterial contamination, and also sanitation and housekeeping items (e.g., potable water, removal of waste and sewage, food handling, and personal cleanliness).

Ergonomic Hazards: Ergonomic hazards include improperly designed tools or work areas. Improper lifting or reaching, poor visual conditions, or repeated motions in an awkward position may be responsible for accidents in the occupational environment. Designing the tools and the job to be done to fit the employee should be of prime importance. Application of engineering and biomechanical principles is required to eliminate hazards of this kind.

7.1.3 POLICY

The APHIS Occupational Health Program will:

- Determine the employee's health in response to the work environment.
- Correlate employee concerns with potential hazards.

- Undertake special biochemical tests to determine if normal bodily functions have been impaired.
- Provide the employee medical guidance on general health problems in relation to the physical requirements of the job.
- Through selected physical examinations, ensure that the employee's health is protected or that preexisting conditions will not be aggravated.

APHIS will utilize the following methods to obtain the best occupational health program possible:

- Biological monitoring,
- Employee physical examinations,
- Environmental monitoring,
- Environmental controls of contaminants at the work location,
- Protective clothing and equipment.

The remaining sections of this Chapter outline and define those health monitoring programs which are available to APHIS employees. Some of these programs are mandatory.